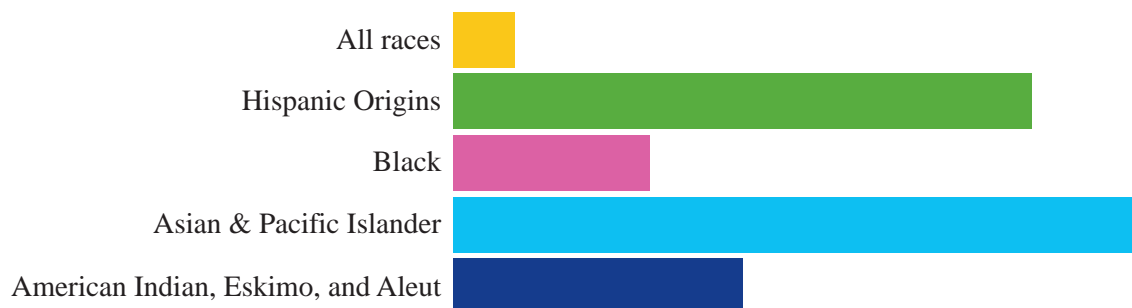


## Serving our Hispanic American Elders

The Hispanic American population is living longer, growing older, and becoming more diverse. The older Hispanic population is one of the fastest growing groups in the nation. In 1990, 5.1 percent of the Hispanic population was 65 or older. Demographers expect that this number will reach 14.1 percent by 2020. These changing demographics have begun to result in an increase in culturally appropriate programs and services responsive to the diverse needs of older Hispanic American adults and their families.

The Hispanic elderly population will be the second most rapidly growing segment between 1990 and 2020:



*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1993) U.S. Population Estimates, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin.*

### Diversity of Hispanic Elders

Its many distinct ethnic groups exemplify the racial and ethnic diversity of the Hispanic American population. Members of these groups have unique languages, cultures, and religions and are diverse in terms of education levels and socioeconomic status. Among Hispanic elders living in the United States, nearly 49 percent are of Mexican descent, 15 percent are of Cuban descent, 12 percent are of Puerto Rican descent, and 25 percent are of other Hispanic heritage.

### Health and Chronic Illnesses

The leading disease-related causes of death for Hispanic Americans include heart disease, cancer, HIV infection, cerebrovascular diseases, pneumonia, influenza, and diabetes. While the Medicare program covers vaccinations to prevent pneumonia, only 15 percent of Hispanic Americans ages 65 or older receive an annual vaccination. AoA is working to end health disparities among older members of racial and ethnic minority populations as part of the Department of Health and Human Services initiative, "Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health 2010." In 2000, AoA awarded a demonstration grant to the Latino Education Project, Inc. of Corpus Christi, Texas, to develop culturally sensitive community-based health promotion and disease prevention programs and to educate older Latinos in the Coastal Bend area of South Texas about the impact and prevention of cardiovascular disease and late onset diabetes. The Latino Education Project also:

- Identifies culturally appropriate prevention activities;
- Encourages the adoption of healthy lifestyles that acknowledge and integrate appropriate cultural practices and diets; and
- Increases access to medical and health interventions.

### Hispanic Americans and Family Caregiving

Twenty-seven percent of Hispanic American households provide informal caregiving to a friend or relative. The typical Hispanic caregiver is a 40-year-old female. More than half of all Hispanic caregivers also have a child age 18 or younger living at home.



## **Older Hispanic Americans and Poverty**

Many older Hispanic American adults are immigrants with limited English language skills, who worked in low-paying jobs that did not provide retirement benefits. This contributed to the fact that 24 percent of Hispanic elders live below the poverty level—more than double the rate of older white, non-Hispanic adults who live in poverty.

## **Education**

On average, older Hispanic American adults have less formal education than the older American population overall. Nearly 60 percent of Hispanic elders have less than a ninth grade education compared to 19.4 percent of older adults nationwide. Sixteen percent have a high school diploma compared to almost 34 percent of elders nationwide. Three percent of Hispanic elders have a bachelor's degree compared to almost 9 percent nationwide.

## **AoA Encourages Hispanic American Communities to Get Involved**

Hispanic communities are encouraged to take a lead role and actively participate in developing state and local plans that affect Hispanic elders. Groups that represent Hispanic elders, their families and service providers are invited to voice concerns and needs during the public hearing process. Under Section 297(8) of the Older Americans Act, state agencies must show their effectiveness in reaching older individuals with the greatest economic and social need, paying particular attention to low-income minority individuals. The state agency will ask people and organizations that know of the needs and concerns of low-income minority older individuals to share their concerns and experiences during the public hearing process.

Working in close partnership with its sister agencies in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the AoA is the official Federal agency dedicated to policy development, planning and the delivery of supportive home and community-based services to older persons and their caregivers. The AoA works through the national aging network of 57 State Units on Aging, 655 Area Agencies on Aging, 225 Tribal and Native organizations representing 300 American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal organizations, and two organizations serving Native Hawaiians, plus thousands of service providers, adult care centers, caregivers, and volunteers. For more information about the AoA, please contact:

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